

Sweet creations

Sugar and spice usually mix into something nice, especially when John Eichinger, K mart 3445, West St. Paul, Minnesota starts baking up a storm. Since the age of eight, Eichinger has been baking and decorating cakes for his family. He made a three tier cake for his parents' 50th anniversary when he was 10 and now bakes and decorates cakes for weddings, birthdays, anniversaries and showers.

"One of my aunts got me interested in cake decorating, but I've never had any special training," Eichinger says.

This past Christmas he made 10 gingerbread houses. "Baking a gingerbread house is something that I've always wanted to do. I spent 48 hours making the first house and so many people liked it and wanted to buy it for a Christmas gift that I ended up making 10 of them!"

Although his gingerbread houses are fully edible, Eichinger sprays them with a preservative so that they can be saved and enjoyed for years to come. The house itself is gingerbread and candy, royal icing drifts over the gingershap roof and dribbles as icicles from the eaves. Light shines through the waxed paper windows and sugar cubes form the chimney and cobblestone walk.

Although it still is the dead of winter in Minnesota, people are now thinking of weddings and 12 couples have already placed their orders with Eichinger. Last November he made what he feels is his grandest attempt—a wedding cake for 500.

"I wish you could have seen it. It was fabulous. The cake was 48 inches tall in the center and one foot off the ground with a fountain in it. The tiers were 16 inches, 14 inches, 10 inches and 8 inches. There were stairs on each side of the cake with the wedding party descending. The batter was white and it took a total of eight hours to make. You don't stop when you are doing a cake like this. You keep going from start to finish."

Word of mouth is Eichinger's best form of advertising and his orders for gingerbread houses for next Christmas will no doubt keep him busy throughout the year.

One would think that being

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Gingerbread house made by John Eichinger looks good enough to eat, but he sprays his houses with a preservative that deters any would-be cookie monsters from destroying his creations.

around all of those sweets that Eichinger would tend to put on weight easily. "The funny thing is that I never get to try anything I make. And if you look at me you'll

know that's true. For Christmas I must have baked 100 dozen cookies and I don't think I had any! And you really do get sick of it after a while. Everything begins

to taste the same. But I love to do this. It's great fun."

Eichinger also makes Christmas sugar tree ornaments and Easter eggs that contain miniature scenes